DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 018 FL 008 332

TITLE English Language Teaching Profile: Nepal.
INSTITUTION British Council, London (England). English-Teaching Information Centre.
PUB DATE Oct 76
NOTE 7p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum; *Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); English Literature; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Instructional Materials; *Language Instruction; Language of Instruction; Language Planning; Language Programs; *Language Role; Language Tests; Multilingualism; Second Language Learning; Teacher Education; Teacher Salaries; Teacher Shortage
IDENTIFIERS *Nepal

ABSTRACT

This is a summary in outline form of the English language teaching situation in Nepal. Among the educated Nepalese, English has for a number of years been almost a second language. Its chief uses are as a medium of instruction in certain subjects at degree level, as the principal language for the growing tourist industry and as the medium of communication between Nepalese and all foreign agencies. English is not taught at primary level (Grades 1-3) but it is compulsory through both stages of secondary education (grades 4-10), where it is allocated five periods per week, and for the greater part of the first two stages of tertiary education (Certificate and Diploma). English is compulsory for at least six semesters at the university level. A good deal of teaching at the degree level is in English. There is a great shortage of English teachers at all levels. Little progress has been made in reducing the great proportion of untrained teachers. The British Council is concentrating its efforts on the training of teachers, the integration of prescribed classroom materials into training courses and the general improvement of the materials themselves. English literature is not taught in the schools, as it is considered irrelevant for the mass of the population. (Author/CFM)

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE: NEPAL

October 1976

1. Role of English

Among the educated Nepalese, English has for a number of years occupied a position almost that of a second language, although the circumstances that led to this situation have now changed. Its chief uses are as a medium of instruction in certain subjects at degree level (and to a lesser extent at diploma level), as the principal language for the growing tourist industry and as the medium of communication between Nepalese officials and all foreign agencies.

Nepali, the national language and the language of government, is spoken by about half the population and used as a lingua franca among about four fifths. Since there are at least forty other languages spoken in Nepal, the familiar problem exists that for some communities English is a third or fourth foreign language.

2. English in Education

English is not taught at primary level (Grades 1-3) but is compulsory through both stages of secondary education (Grades 4-10), where it is allocated 5 periods per week, and for the greater part of the first two stages of tertiary education (Certificate and Diploma). The School Leaving Certificate (SLC) requires a candidate to pass in all subjects including English. SLC is still an essential qualification for admission to government service and to the university. From this year the University has introduced in addition a general 'aptitude test' (in fact an entrance examination) in a number of subjects including English.

University education consists of three stages (Certificate, Diploma, Degree) of four semesters each. English is compulsory for at least six semesters and on most courses for more. Two papers in English are taken in each semester. English is not generally the medium of instruction for Certificate and Diploma with the exception of courses in English as a subject and certain sciences; it is nevertheless commonly said that English is the medium of instruction at 'university level'. It is probably true to say that a good deal of teaching at degree level is in English.

At secondary and tertiary level the compulsory English courses (General English) are basically language courses. There is no literature included in the secondary syllabus though a little has begun to creep back at Certificate and Diploma level. At the secondary stage (Grades 8-10) there is an optional English course, taken, in fact, by most students, which consists of a series of prescribed poems and short stories. At tertiary level there are also 'Special English' courses; these are optional and contain literature.

Syllabuses for all subjects at secondary level are drawn up by specialist committees convened by the Curriculum Development Centre established in 1972. At tertiary level there are Instruction Committees (Boards of Studies) in each subject area, which draw up syllabuses for each of the three stages. Council-recruited or council-trained staff have been members of committees drawing up English syllabuses for secondary schools, general English courses and English teacher-training courses at university level.

3. Teachers

There is a great shortage of English teachers at all levels. Reliable statistics

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are difficult to obtain for the general stock of teachers; for teachers of a particular subject there are at present no figures available though it should be possible to have some information in the course of the present year. It is most likely that fewer than 20% of English teachers will be trained fully and fewer than 30% will have received in-service training.

The current salary scales are:

Primary school teacher (SLC holder only):	NCRs. 135/- per month
Primary school teacher (Certificate):	NCRs. 182/- per month
Lower Secondary teacher (Certificate):	NCRs. 182/- per month
Secondary school teacher (Diploma):	NCRs. 570/- per month
Secondary school head (Master's degree):	NCRs. 750/- per month
University assistant lecturer	NCRs. 570/- per month
University lecturer	NCRs. 750/- per month
University reader:	
University professor:	NCRs.1500/- per month

(These rates are misleading and are probably inaccurate. For teachers they represent base rates and take no account of increments. Most teachers will earn more than this. At present there is a certain amount of confusion as the National Education System has now been implemented in all parts of Nepal, but not yet in all grades. Old and new salary scales are in use side by side. There have also been some increases. However, the Ministry of Education will not give any general figures until they publish a revised salary scale later this year.)

Training of primary and secondary school teachers is carried out on the various campuses of the University Institute of Education (formerly the College of Education).

Teaching staff at all levels are Nepalese, with the few exceptions mentioned below (Section 6).

For at least ten years various types of in-service courses for English teachers were run by the Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Council. In 1974 in-service training in special subjects was largely discontinued. It was felt at the time that in attempting to run pre-service and in-service courses with too few staff it did not make the best use of the resources of the Institute of Education, which had by this time taken over responsibility for all training. Little if any progress seemed to have been made in reducing the great proportion of untrained teachers or in meeting the needs of the system. In the past year, with a change of Dean, the Institute has again begun to look on in-service training in English as an important part of its programme, though the emphasis has been on very short courses for teachers, inspectors and the Institute's own lecturing staff.

4. Teaching Material

The distribution of textbooks has improved considerably since the implementation of the Education Plan. The cost of textbooks is nevertheless still a cause of wastage at both primary and secondary level. The Government has reduced the cost of textbooks recently in an attempt to lower the drop-out rate; the Curriculum Development Centre is working on schemes to reduce the number of textbooks needed to a minimum. Free textbooks for primary schools have also been made available in selected remote areas. The Education Plan requires uniform textbooks to be produced by the government educational press (JEMO). A full range of English textbooks has been produced with Council assistance over the past four years (My English Book and English Reader series).

Most schools have few if any facilities to enable them to use advanced teaching aids, even if they could afford them. A good blackboard is something of a luxury. Teachers who have had overseas or in-service training may occasionally use wall pictures or construct a flannel board.

5. English outside the educational system

There are a few independent, Nepalese-run language schools none of which is of any consequence. The University runs a separate 'Campus of International Languages', which runs intensive courses in French, German and Japanese, but not so far in English. The possibility of adding English to its curriculum is mentioned from time to time, but nothing has yet been done. It is hoped that the Council will be asked to help when preparations for such a course begin. The only serious English-teaching operation is that run by USIS in a well-equipped English Language Institute on USIS premises. The Institute is on contract to USAID to provide intensive courses for potential trainees who need to pass TOEFL for admission to American educational institutions. In addition, the Institute runs courses at three levels for the general public at nominal fees. After a number of years of indifferent operation depending on casual short-term directors and teachers, the Institute went through a phase of excellent and dynamic direction during 1974 and 1975, using a regular intake of terminating Peace Corps volunteers, chiefly from Thailand returning home through Nepal, with a good deal of ELT expertise. Recent changes in visa regulations have made this impossible and the director who enlivened the institute has been reposted. The future of the operation is once again uncertain.

Since July 1976 the Council has been running a direct teaching project for TC nominated candidates whose Davies Test scores are too low to allow them sufficient tuition in Britain. Five courses have been given and a sixth is in progress.

6. British support for the teaching of English

Council, ODM and VSO support for English teaching in Nepal is at present -

a. Education Officer (Grade E)
b. 1 Cat. IV Head of English, Budhanilkantha School
   2 Cat. IV ELT Advisers, Institute of Education
   1 Cat. IV ELT Curriculum/Textbook Adviser, Ministry of Education
   (Not yet at post)
   7 VSO English teachers in Education and Humanities campuses of Tribhuvan University.

The duties of ELT staff have undergone a long and slow process of reorganisation and it is now becoming clear what the new pattern ought to be for the next year or so.

The areas of involvement are as follows:-

i. Pre-service and in-service training of English teachers at the Institute of Education.

Broadly speaking, ELT Adviser (M. O'Hara) is responsible for developing courses at Certificate level, producing model teaching materials and generally supervising the teaching of similar courses on the several campuses. Language Arts Adviser (Susan Fortescue) is primarily responsible for developing courses at Diploma level and a projected M.Ed. course. The Certificate and Diploma work is to be completed by January 1977.

ii. Teaching the English courses at Certificate and Diploma level on campuses of Tribhuvan University, chiefly in Education and Humanities.

This is the area of VSO involvement.

iii. Curriculum and Textbook Adviser at the Ministry of Education is to be concerned with the evaluation of the secondary school English curriculum, with the revision and modification of the series of textbooks produced under the supervision of the previous textbook adviser, publication of the already prepared series of teachers' guides and assistance with English radio broadcasts for schools.

iv. Head of English at Budhanilkantha School: this is a post that is somewhat isolated from the system. Nevertheless it is direct involvement in secondary English teaching with considerable possibilities for collaboration (in methodology, materials production) with the I of E posts. Contact between the School and the Institute of Education has been slow to develop but is now increasing.

v. Education officer co-ordinates these activities, advises and teaches on Institute of Education or University English Department courses when required and directs the English teaching project at the Council. EO also sits on syllabus committees of the Curriculum Development Centre when invited to do so and assists with the selection of candidates for ELT training overseas whether under British technical co-operation or other Colombo Plan schemes.

In September 1975 an ELT books exhibition was shown at the Council in Kathmandu, at the University Library and on Institute of Education campuses in Birganj, Tansen and Pokhara.

In the past four years there have been two small-scale drama visits - the most recent and most successful by a group from the Royal Shakespeare Company. Local drama has received a good deal of unofficial support from L/A staff: EO was Secretary of the local amateur society for two years and all the present L/A staff, as well as the former ELO and 2 previous ARs, have been active in productions.

English Language Units and View and Teach, together with material from CIEL Bangkok, are used on our direct teaching project and on I of E courses. Using Magazine Pictures and Using the Tape-recorder in the Classroom are also shown to teachers.

7. American Support for the Teaching of English

USAID is active in many areas of educational aid. ELT by mutual agreement has been left to the Council. One intake of Peace Corps volunteers (1972) taught English in Secondary Schools but the project was discontinued.

8. The Council is now concentrating its ELT work on a narrower front than has been the case in the past. Although we are to some extent involved with curriculum and materials as well as teaching at both secondary and tertiary level, the present emphasis is very much on the training of teachers, the integration of prescribed classroom materials into training courses and the general improvement of the materials themselves. In addition it is hoped that through broadcasting and the preparation of ancillary teaching aids, there will be a gradual enrichment of the ELT process.

The National Education System rightly emphasises the importance of Nepali both as a national language and an integrating force in a country of considerable racial and linguistic diversity. The enforcement of Nepali as the medium of instruction throughout the secondary system is both sensible and necessary if a uniform system is to be achieved. The loss of the small number of highly influential English medium schools has meant a temporary decline in the numbers of students entering higher education with a fluent command of English language skills. This will also be reflected in technical, administrative and commercial training, and their standard of English is still high. Budhanilkantha School also teaches in Nepali but maintains a high level of English, partly because there are British teachers on the staff but equally because the teachers are well trained and English teaching is made effective. If such schools are really able to become models, the gradual improvements in teacher training should ensure that in the next decade the standard of English will be adequate for the role it has to play and that this minimal level of proficiency will be reasonably widely distributed. The Council is assisting as fully as possible to bring this about.

9. Current Research and Bibliography

ETIC has copies of textbooks and syllabuses mentioned in this profile.

LITERATURE ANNEX

1. Status of Literature

1.1 Among the elite, educated in India and in some cases in England, English literature enjoys a status similar to its status in India. For the mass of the population it is irrelevant.

2. Literary Education

2.1 English literature is not taught in schools.

2.2 There are the beginnings of an association of teachers informally organized by a Curriculum Development Centre staff member. Initial meetings attracted about 80 teachers. The Council assists when requested and gives general encouragement.

2.3 Simplified readers are in use in some school libraries.

2.4 For organisation of degree courses in Literature see Syllabus in ETIC Archives.

3. Literary Scene

3.1 The Nepalis are proud of their national language and its script but there appears to be no highly developed literature.

3.2 There is some evidence of a movement to the direction of translations of British literature into the vernacular. Some travel books for example have English and Nepali texts.

3.3 Book supply is fair to poor, and apart from the Council and USIS Libraries there is only the University Central Library devoted mainly to non-literary technical subjects.